

THE NEGRO PEOPLE and the **COMMUNIST PARTY**



By **BEN DAVIS, Jr.**

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THIS is a personal invitation to you to join the Communist Party.

It is addressed especially to Negro citizens—workers in industry, farmers, sharecroppers, professionals, office workers, intellectuals and to all who are patriotic fighters for their nation and their people—men and women.

This invitation is extended to you in the spirit of hastening the victory of our country and the United Nations.

When you become a member of the Communist Party, you have taken the step which will enable you to become the most effective, conscious and clear-headed fighter for eliminating the shame of Jim-Crow and all other obstacles to winning the war as quickly as possible—and for a people's peace.

There is no mystery about joining the Communist Party, although men like Martin Dies of Texas, John Rankin of Mississippi, Coughlin, Hearst and others who are fascists under the skin pretend there is. Such poll-tax Representatives as Dies, Rankin, Hobbs of Alabama, and Eugene Cox of Georgia, have fastened themselves upon Congress only by virtue of disfranchising the majority of the people in several Southern states. (In the Second Congressional District of Texas three-fourths of the white citizens and practically all of the colored citizens are disfranchised.) These Congressmen have practically overthrown American democracy in the poll-tax regions, through their poll-tax "race-supremacy" system. They defile the Congress, where they systematically bait

the Negro people, labor, the Jewish people, and do whatever else they can to sabotage the war effort and the interests of our armed forces and those of our Allies. The poll-taxers hate the Communist Party because Communists are among the best fighters against their Hitler-helping activities and against their dastardly oppression of the Negro and white masses of the South. Behind a smokescreen of slanders against the Communist Party, the poll-taxers uphold the "race supremacy" theories of Hitler, and seek to vilify every American who raises a clear voice for victory, national unity, freedom and equality. Their hatred is a badge of honor to be worn proudly by all who treasure the democratic traditions of our country and who work for victory over fascist slavery.

Perhaps I should attack this Hitler-inspired "mystery" conception by explaining how I became a member of the Communist Party. It happened in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1933.

I had the honor of serving on the legal staff of the International Labor Defense as chief defense attorney for Angelo Herndon, young Negro Communist leader. Herndon, then 18 years old, was falsely charged with attempting to incite insurrection, a charge which carried the death penalty, on the basis of an antiquated Georgia statute. Actually, he had led a peaceful and lawful unemployed demonstration before the City Courthouse in Atlanta.

HOW THE AUTHOR BECAME A COMMUNIST

In the course of the trial, I was subjected as a Negro lawyer to as many insults and violations of my citizenship rights as my client. The same Jim-Crow laws that applied to him applied to me, as to my entire people. The judge, who probably had not seen a Negro lawyer before, must have come perilously close to double apoplexy because it was "too much" for him to face a Communist, to say nothing of having to face a Negro lawyer defending the constitutional rights of this Communist. The judge continually intimated that I, too,

was a Communist, when actually I wasn't. The more I insisted upon my client's rights, the more unconcealed became the judge's red-baiting intimations.

The truth was that I had been reared in a home where my father was once a member of the Republican National Committee, and who stuck fast to the traditions of Lincoln. I believed very strongly in those traditions myself, and sought to uphold them in defense of my client.

So when the judge treated me as a Communist because I sought to uphold these traditions it became clear to me that the Communist Party was the political party of these traditions in modern times. Humanity's struggle for liberty and especially the struggle of my people against national persecution began to unfold before me in terms of my own experience. The job of emancipation that Lincoln left uncompleted, the job that I wanted completed now, I felt could be completed only through the use of the new Party of Emancipation, the new Party of Douglass and Abolition, the Communist Party. So I joined the Communist Party—determined to secure the full benefits of the membership which the judge had mistakenly attributed to me in his red-baiting tirades.

This is how I became a member of the Communist Party—on the basis of my own experience as an American. Thousands of other Negro and white workers have joined the Communist Party out of their experiences and convictions that the Communist Party alone offered the program for achieving a world in which they would be free, equal, secure and happy.

The questions arise: What does the Communist Party offer the working Negro man and woman at this crucial moment of world history, when our country is engaged in its most fateful struggle for national survival? What are the policies of the Communist Party as they relate to the present war and as they apply to the specific problems of colored Americans? Why should I, a Negro, join the Communist Party?

First, let's discuss the character of the present world war. This is a just war for the survival of our nation and all free-

dom-loving peoples against a hideous gang of Axis murderers headed by Adolf Hitler. All peoples—irrespective of race, color, creed or political affiliation—who hate slavery and aspire to freedom, have a stake in victory. If the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Asia, Africa, Burma, the West Indies, or Latin America, are to achieve their historic goal of freedom and full nationhood, it will come only in the world current of the defeat of the Axis attempt to enslave humanity.

THE NEGRO'S STAKE IN VICTORY

The cause of the United Nations, with the Soviet Union, Great Britain, China and our own country as the leaders, is the cause whose victory alone is consistent with the realization of the freedom of the colored peoples—now and after the war. Ethiopia, symbol of the Negro people's cause on a world-wide scale, realized this fact. At the side of the United Nations, the heroic Ethiopians were able to expel from their soil the brigands of Mussolini, and are today in a position to establish their full independence in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter.

The full liberation of Negro Americans cannot come out of the triumph of the Hitler-Japanese tyrants, who have imposed medieval slavery upon several millions of people in Europe and Asia. Negro Americans, who have suffered from fascist "race-supremacy" theories, have a special interest in working for the speediest realization of the Casablanca decision for the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis gang. They will hail President Roosevelt's visit to the Negro Republic of Liberia as a blow to the "race supremacy" theories shared alike by Adolf Hitler and Martin Dies.

In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler has already described Negroes as "half-apes." Imagine, if you can, the horrible degradation which would be the special lot of the Negro people—workers, farmers, professionals and intellectuals—if this fascist monster won the war. First Hitler would smash the labor movement, bulwark of American democracy, and in which

there are half a million organized Negro workers. Such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, the National Negro Congress, the March-on-Washington Movement, and scores of other organizations which in any degree voice the aspirations of the Negro would be bloodily suppressed. The Negro churches, long forums for real brotherhood and social uplift, would be destroyed. Poor Negro farmers and sharecroppers would be driven into a bondage worse than the days of chattel slavery.

Lynching would become the official policy of a Quisling government which would attempt to exterminate the Negro population as Hitler is now trying to do to the Jewish people and to the other patriotic peoples of every conquered country in Europe. All the evils from which the Negro people now suffer would become a thousand times more terrible, and the very right of the Negro people to struggle against the Jim-Crow system would be ruthlessly and bloodily stamped out. Their gains on the road to full liberation—made painfully and all too slowly—would be wiped out.

Therefore those who say that this is a "white man's war" and that Negroes should have nothing to do with it are, consciously or unconsciously, helping the fascist enemy of our country and of the Negro people. Similar voices were heard during the Civil War, and they came from the slaveowners. Today these voices come from Hitler's Japanese stooges now murdering the Chinese people, from the Trotskyites, the Norman Thomas Socialists and others who always find "radical" phrases with which to clothe their assistance to the fascists. The Negro people repudiate these pro-fascist voices today as they repudiated the pro-slaveowners' voices in 1861-65. The words of the great Negro Abolitionist statesman, Frederick Douglass, friend and advisor of Lincoln, ring true in 1943:

"There are weak and cowardly men in all nations. We have them amongst us. They tell you this is the 'white man's

war'; that you 'will be no better off after than before the war'; that the getting of you into the army is to 'sacrifice you on the first opportunity.' Believe them not; cowards themselves, they do not wish to have their cowardice shamed by your brave example. Leave them to their timidity, or to whatever motive may hold them back."

The greatest, most powerful and most dependable champion of freedom and equality for all peoples in the coalition known as the United Nations is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The participation of the Soviet Union in the war is one of the decisive factors determining the character of the war as one for survival and national liberation.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WAR

Under the leadership of Lenin's most able pupil, Joseph Stalin, and of the Soviet Communist Party, the Soviet people have established a socialist, classless society which has given world civilization its highest form of democracy. Racial discrimination is a crime in the Soviet state and all its peoples, many of whom are colored, have the right to jobs, security, education, leisure, cultural development, freedom, happiness and equality. That is why the Red Army, in which all Soviet citizens have equal rights, can amaze the world today.

As soon as Soviet power was established the nations and national minorities enslaved under tsarism were liberated and have together built a multi-national state of free and independent national republics. The Negro people in particular will long remember the lone voice of Maxim Litvinoff, present Soviet Ambassador to the United States, in the League of Nations eloquently and passionately espousing the cause of Ethiopia against Mussolini's bandits and against the Munich policy. It was the Soviet Union alone which aided China, Spain and Ethiopia in their struggle for independence.

The Soviet Union is a beacon light of freedom to the peo-

ples of the world, an inspirer and proven friend of all nations and peoples who love freedom. That is the principal reason why it is the most powerful ally of our country's fight for survival. Millions of people opposed to the principles of Communism are daily realizing that any impairment of the Soviet Union would set back the cause of freedom for centuries, just as the loss of the anti-slavery cause in 1865 would have encouraged reaction and slavery on a world scale.

The participation of the great Soviet land of freedom and equality in the war is the international guarantee to the Negro people, and to the oppressed of the earth whatever their race, color or creed, of the national liberation, character of the war in accordance with the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. This socialist country stands as a monument to the ability of oppressed peoples to independently govern themselves.

In the patriotic interest of our own nation, the Communist Party is the only political party which has consistently advocated close relations between America and the Soviet Union. Even the most conservative circles today recognize the wisdom of this advocacy. Were the Communist Party larger, and therefore stronger and more influential among the workers and the people generally, millions more Americans would understand that the defeat of the Axis, the safety of our nation, and the future of the world depend upon understanding and cooperation between our country and the Soviet Union.

The struggles of the Negro people for full citizenship rights are today part of the fight of the United Nations and of our own country for survival as a nation. This is the history and fighting tradition of Negro Americans. It was true when Negro soldiers fought under George Washington's leadership in the Revolutionary War of Independence. It was true when 80,000 Negroes died in the Civil War to end chattel slavery and preserve the Union. It was true when the Negro members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fought and died to preserve Spanish democracy from Hitler's and Mussolini's stooge, Franco. It was symbolized today when Dorie Miller

manned a machine gun against the Japanese fascists at Pearl Harbor. Just as the best interests of our nation require full freedom of the Negro, so the best interests of the Negro require the preservation of the sovereignty of our nation and strong ties with the forces of progress on an international scale.

True to their glorious and patriotic traditions in the cause of freedom, Negro Americans are giving their sons, husbands, daughters and wives—their blood, sweat and tears—to the war effort. Colored citizens are in the factories making the implements of war for our own and our Allies' soldiers. Negroes are in the armed forces in greater proportion than Negro Americans are in the total population. The only limitation to their contributions is the damnable and demoralizing system of Jim Crow, which impedes our entire war effort.

VICTORY WILL HELP SMASH JIM CROW

The urgency of military necessity requires that all treatment of the Negro people and the colonial people as "inferior" and "second class" human beings be promptly ended. Otherwise, we are inviting more Singapores—and ultimate defeat. The Great Emancipator found it a war necessity to free the slaves and to extend the citizenship of Negroes by bringing them into the armed forces in order to achieve victory over the slaveowners. Military compulsion and the united power of the freedom-loving peoples are propelling the United Nations in the direction of universal liberation. The right to self-determination for India, for the colonial peoples of Africa, the West Indies, Asia, Puerto Rico and Latin America must be recognized in order to mobilize these peoples for a people's victory and a people's peace.

Although the Jim-Crow system is still in force in our country, it is slowly—too slowly—giving ground to the vast new forces of labor and the people united in the cause of victory. New developments are to be seen in cracking of the walls of

discrimination existing in war industries, in breaking down a limited number of barriers in the armed forces and in other phases of our national life. The President's Executive Order against job-discrimination, Wendell Willkie's voice for the equality of all peoples, the nation-wide anti-poll tax movement, the forthright statements of C.I.O. President Philip Murray and other labor leaders—all these reflect the deep new currents among the trade unions and the people generally for a new and square deal for Negro citizens, which recognizes them as free and equal citizens. This is a logical consequence of the present people's war. But there is no room for complacency or self-satisfaction. In order to speed the tempo of ending Jim-Crow, it must be fought for actively by labor and the people. Total mobilization for winning the war can spell the death-knell of the disgraceful Jim-Crow system.

The Communist Party, equipped with the scientific teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, is the only party that has placed the elimination of all "race supremacy" practices and theories as a pre-condition for swift victory.

There are some people who say that for the sake of national unity in the war we must give up the fight for Negro rights and keep quiet about the terrible wrongs that are being done to the Negro people. The Communist Party does not agree with this false idea. Some other people say that because of these frightful wrongs the Negroes should oppose our country's victory in this war, or place demands against the war—saying in effect that we will support the war only "if this" or "if that." Neither does the Communist Party agree with these people. Such people are doing the greatest injury to the liberation of colored Americans and to the cause of the nation. If either one of these wrong alternatives were followed only Hitler and the fascist-minded men of our own country would gain.

The struggle for Negro rights was always a matter of justice and the enforcement of the Constitution. *Now this fight must be pursued relentlessly as a military necessity—as a matter of*

achieving victory at the earliest moment and at the least cost.

Earl Browder, General Secretary of the Communist Party and one of the greatest statesmen our country has produced, placed this issue squarely in his book *Victory—And After*:

"... Can the United States lead the 29 United Nations to victory, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, when key positions in its government are held by men who openly proclaim and practice the doctrine that the 'colored' races are inferior, to be held in subjection to the 'white race,' when a majority of the population of the United Nations are of the 'colored races'?

"These issues cannot be evaded or glossed over. It is not a contribution to national unity to be silent about them. This is not something that can be postponed in the interests of national unity for victory, for this is of the very essence of democracy, and the remedy of these profound abuses a *precondition for victory.*"

We Communists are uncompromisingly opposed to the appeasement of the deadly Dies gang as we are opposed to the appeasement of the Finnish fascist government, the Vichy traitors, Franco or any others wedded to Hitler's policies. We seek to organize labor and all other patriots to support the President's progressive win-the-war policies and to rout the Copperhead conspiracy in Washington. We urge Negro and white Americans to give the Commander-in-Chief a fighting support through their own independent activities.

If the X tank factory in Detroit refuses to employ Negroes, the result is less tanks with which our Allies and our own boys—Negro and white—can smite the enemy. If discrimination is allowed to honeycomb our armed forces, then the fighting morale of all American soldiers cannot reach its topmost point. If Negroes are barred from certain types of service altogether, then we have not mobilized our full military strength. If Negro women are Jim-Crowed in the WAACS and the WAVES and SPARS, we are not bringing to bear all our

woman power against the enemy. These manifestations of "white supremacy," typified in the insulting policy of "blood segregation" within our own country, not only affect Negro Americans, but all Americans. The Communist Party is in the front ranks of all those trying to eliminate these evils as a requirement for speedy victory.

The followers of the late political gangster Leon Trotsky, and of Norman Thomas, pretend a sincere interest in the elimination of Jim Crow, but it is the same sort of interest out of which Quisling turned Norway over to his Nazi masters.

We Communists fight against the Jim-Crow system as a part of the national effort to speed production and to speed the all-out offensive—especially the opening of the second front against Hitler on the European continent. We urge a centralized war economy in order to strengthen the home front and mobilize our total manpower irrespective of race, color or creed. The Hitler-Dies gang is desperate—and dangerous because it sees the people moving toward abolishing the "white supremacy" system as a means of winning the war.

ORGANIZED LABOR FIGHTS DISCRIMINATION

In order to win their fight for full liberation, the Negro people need allies. The greatest of these allies is the organized labor movement, with which colored Americans must work in ever closer solidarity. Thus any proposal like that for a "civil disobedience" movement would divide the Negro people, and endanger their unity with the labor movement; and this is the objective of the poll taxers and Copperheads—an objective which they have not been able to accomplish themselves. The "civil disobedience" proposal places the fight for Negro rights as though the interest of the Negro people was opposed to the interest of the nation. It is, therefore, a danger to the war effort and to the Negro people.

The emergence of the fight for Negro rights as one of the major issues of the nation in the last fifteen years has been due

to the fact that increasingly the labor movement—the C.I.O. and thousands of progressive A. F. of L. members—have made this fight their own, as it must be for the advancement of labor. This is the greatest and most positive single development in the struggle for Negro rights since the Civil War.

The Communist Party is the political party which united the struggle for the Negro's equal citizenship with the building of the trade unions and of the political movement of the workers. Only the Communist Party, the party of the working class, could achieve this, because it alone places the national liberation of Negro Americans as a fundamental responsibility of labor. No one can honestly deny that one of the greatest contributions made to the development of American democracy—a contribution which is paying patriotic dividends today—is the leadership of the Communist Party in making the struggle for the full citizenship of Negro Americans the concern of labor and of all fair-minded Americans.

One of the most important duties of the unions today, insisted upon by the Communist Party, is to end the stench of the slave market which still remains in many unions, particularly in the railroad industry.

Where the Communist Party is strong, the trade unions speak and fight for Negro rights. The trade unions—the struggle for full equal rights—need a strong and a large Communist Party. The very fact that labor today fights increasingly for Negro equality and against anti-Semitism is a tribute to the influence and devotion of the Communist Party.

COMMUNISTS IN THE FIGHT FOR NEGRO RIGHTS

The Communist Party is the party of the American workers, Negro and white. The Negro-haters long ago tried to scare the Southern white workers away from the Communist Party by calling it the "Negro party." But it is not only the party of the American workers of all races, creeds and colors, it is proud to be known as the party of the Negro

people and seeks ever to be worthy of that name. For only through being the party of the Negro people can it be true to the interests of the white workers. Because of the growing labor movement in the deep South, and because of the influence of its Communist vanguard, Negro and white workers are learning that through unity and solidarity they can effectively combat the poll-tax system, lynch law, Ku Klux "justice," and end the reactionary system of divide and rule.

The Communist Party is the party of socialism and socialism alone can accomplish the system of exploitation of man by man. Because of its long-range perspective, it can champion the immediate interests of labor and the nation. But it has subordinated the issue of socialism today in order to work for the broadest unity of all patriots—irrespective of race, color, creed, class or political viewpoint—to achieve that national unity behind the Commander-in-Chief which will ensure victory in accordance with the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms. Victory over the Axis is a precondition for the advancement of mankind and world civilization.

If you are a Negro citizen—worker, farmer, professional or intellectual, man or woman—and loyally devoted to the patriotic interest of your country and your people—then you belong in the Communist Party. You have seen the Communist Party in action—crusading for political, social and economic equality of all citizens alike, for liberty and religious freedom, for a strong and united labor movement, for the Negro and white unity so essential to achieving these goals. You have tasted the fruits of successes against the Jim-Crow system, fearlessly and uncompromisingly led by the Communist Party. You have admired and respected the Communists, and most of you have learned that the red-baiting slanders against Communists come from the enemies of the Negro people and of the nation.

Not since Frederick Douglass ran for Vice President of the United States on the Equal Rights ticket in 1876 has a Negro run for the highest posts in our country. But James W. Ford,

outstanding Negro leader and member of the National Committee of the Communist Party, has three times been the running mate of William Z. Foster, National Chairman of the Communist Party, and Earl Browder. The Vice Presidential candidacy of Ford, and the long list of Negro Communist leaders, symbolize the uncompromising position of the Communist Party for the full and equal citizenship of the Negro people. Negro Communists are leaders not only of their people but of white progressive workers and masses. No other political party can or has raised the significance of Negro leadership to the status in American life in keeping with the dignity and statesmanlike capacities of the Negro people.

It is not enough for you to support the Communist Party's program, as vital and important as that support is. You should become a member of the only party which today represents the fighting traditions of the Negro people. You are not content to sit on the sidelines, even though you are in the cheering section, while others, skilled in the science of world affairs, play on the team. You yourself want to become a conscious, creative individual in fashioning victory and a better world. Only by joining the Communist Party can you acquire that political understanding and scientific personal guidance which will enable you to perform your duty to your people and your nation. Neither can you fight for the full liberation of your people unless you understand the relation of that fight to the building of the labor movement and are equipped to take your place in the vanguard of the world forces which will destroy Hitlerism and shape a free, equal and peaceful world.

Membership in the Communist Party does not require that you give up your civic, church, religious, social or labor organization or affiliation. It adds clarity and political understanding to your efforts in every sphere of activity.

If you are a Negro worker, farmer, intellectual or professional who wants to play his part in achieving the victory of the United Nations and the liberation of all peoples, then you should join the Communist Party today.



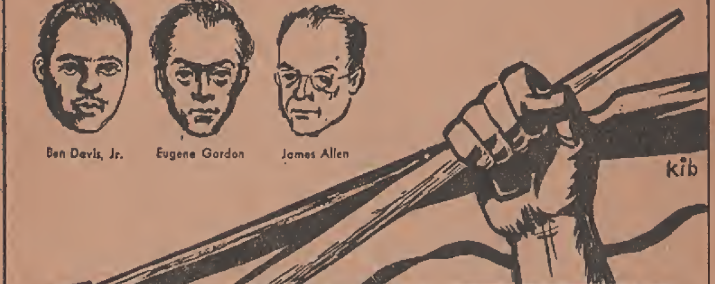
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